

Saad Gulzar

Title: "Politicians: Experimental Evidence on Candidacy from KP, Pakistan"

Abstract:

The identity of politicians matters for outcomes in representative democracies. What is the role of incentives in determining who contests and wins elections? To study this, we conduct a field experiment with more than 10,000 first-time prospective politicians spanning 240 villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Our enumerators conduct one-on-one meetings with 50 randomly selected citizens in every village, as well as hold trainings open to everyone in the village. During this meetings and trainings, we emphasize either *private* benefits from becoming a politician, such as respect and influence, or *social* benefits, such as the ability to provide services to the community. We then study how making these different benefits salient changes who decides to file papers for political candidacy. In addition, we focus on the consequences this carries for representation.

We find that candidacy among randomly sampled citizens *decreases* when private benefits are made salient, and *increases* when social benefits are made salient. Next, we restrict attention to only those who have filed papers for candidacy and show that making private benefits salient increases the political eliteness of the candidates, as measured by village committee membership and connections with politicians and bureaucrats. However, these people also exhibit more prosocial preferences and competence to perform the political job. Emphasizing social benefits, by contrast, makes candidates less elite, and instead, driven by preferences for more private benefits.

In sum, our results suggest that electing competent politicians may come at the cost of politicians who look like the average citizen.